

Creative Interventions Clearinghouse

Art as a Solution: Integrating Children's Literature and Visual Arts With Solution Focused Counseling

Elsa Soto Leggett

University of Houston

Purpose:

The purpose of this creative intervention is to integrate the use of children's literature and visual arts into solution-focused counseling in a way that encourages children to use the verbal and nonverbal expressions of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are hallmarks of their communication development.

Materials Needed:

Children's literature, paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, paints

Procedures:

Stage 1: Identifying the Problem and Setting Goals

After reading a feelings-rich children's book, the child identifies three feelings from the story that they are feeling right now, as well as one feeling they would like to change. If the problem is unknown or they are hesitant to verbally identify any feelings, the child should draw a picture of the situation that is troubling to them. Allow them to describe the details of the picture to you when they are finished so that you can begin to identify people and things that are important to them.

Stage 2: The Perfect Day

Ask, "Imagine that tomorrow was perfect and you didn't have to worry about any of the problems you have today. What would that perfect day look like?" Both children's literature and visual art may be used during this stage by reading a book and discussing the elements that would make a "perfect day" for the child, and/or drawing a picture of their "perfect day."

Stage 3: Finding Exceptions

Ask, "Can you think of any time when you didn't have the problem you're having now?" The client thinks of exceptions to the problem, preferably from the recent past, and draws them out on paper. Some of these exceptions may look like bits and pieces of their "perfect day."

Stage 4: Scaling

Draw a scaled line and ask, "If a 10 was your idea of a perfect day, and a 1 was the worst day you've ever had, show me where you are right now." The child marks where they are on that scale and then draws what that looks like for them.

Process Questions and Follow-Up:

None

Practice Setting:

Mental Health Agency/Private Practice

For full article and case examples, please see Leggett, E. S. (2009). A creative application of solution-focused counseling: An integration with children's literature and visual arts. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 4(2), 191-200